

## **ABSTRACT**

Methods and devices for creating and transferring custom emoticons allow a user to adopt an arbitrary image as an emoticon, which can then be represented by a character sequence in real-time communication. In one implementation, custom emoticons can be included in a message and transmitted to a receiver in the message. In another implementation, character sequences representing the custom emoticons can be transmitted in the message instead of the custom emoticons in order to preserve performance of text messaging. At the receiving end, the character sequences are replaced by their corresponding custom emoticons, which can be retrieved locally if they have been previously received, or can be retrieved from the sender in a separate communication from the text message if they have not been previously received.